

TESTIMONY OF JACK DEMPSEY
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM
January 20, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 521 and 522 as president of the Michigan Historical Commission. I am also a member of the law firm Dickinson Wright PLLC.

SB 521

The Commission supports the substitute (S-1) you are considering today. S-1 incorporates the Commission's input and suggestions during a collaborative effort with the Department of Natural Resources through several public meetings and extensive communications during 2015.

This bill and its companion, SB 522, would update and replace the 1913 Michigan Historical Commission Act, MCL 399.1 et seq. Although portions of the 1913 Act have been amended as late as 2001, the statute has not kept pace with changes wrought by executive orders, Attorney General opinions, appropriations boilerplate, and the evolving needs of Michigan's citizens.

I firmly believe S-1 will advance the cause of preserving and promoting Michigan's rich and unique heritage. Passage would enable the Commission, the Michigan Historical Center, and the Department of Natural Resources to forge a strong partnership with clear roles and working processes to elevate our irreplaceable, diverse heritage so that it can play a vital role in building the 21st century Michigan we all seek.

The Commission's ongoing work includes:

- Michigan Historical Marker program, MCL 399.151 et seq.
- Historic Capitol Park in Detroit
- Civil War Sesquicentennial, including the first Michigan monument at Antietam National Battlefield Park

- The John B. Swainson and Milliken/Adams/Kelley awards
- Aiding DNR's mission: the "conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the State's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations"
- Aiding components of State and Federal government on history matters
- Partnering with nonprofit organizations to promote Michigan history

S-1 will enable the Commission to continue this work to help our citizens discover, enjoy, and find inspiration in their heritage.

SB 522

The Commission also supports the substitute (S-1) for this bill being considered today. Again, we were given opportunity to provide input to the DNR in an effort at improvement and to work cooperatively on refinements to the bill as introduced.

SB 522 is tie-barred to SB 521 and repeals the 1913 Act. Therefore, on behalf of the Commission, I respectfully request this Committee favorably report both bills together.

Thank you.